



Fact Sheet: High Capacity Transit, Modes and Corridors

Why focus on high capacity transit?

Traffic congestion comes along with being one of the fastest growing counties in Washington. Long-term trends indicate that Clark County will continue to experience an increase in its population and jobs which will drive evaluation of other transportation options. A study of high capacity transit (HCT) will identify opportunities for its use to move people safer and faster by:

- providing additional travel options,
- improving mobility and accessibility, and
- offering cost saving efficiencies.

These opportunities will help meet the county’s growth and economic development goals while enabling more efficient and reliable alternatives to getting around the county along the major travel corridors.

What is HCT?

High capacity transit is a term used to describe many types or modes of transit that move large numbers of people quickly and efficiently. High capacity transit includes bus rapid transit, streetcars, light rail, monorail, commuter rail, and other types of transit. In Clark County, high capacity transit would help create a network of transit options that let residents travel easily throughout the county while avoiding crowded roads and highways.



Commuter Rail Concept

Examples of HCT modes

The HCT system study will examine multiple modes and corridors in Clark County to determine what is best for meeting the future transit needs of its residents. Examples of HCT modes include:

Heavy rail rapid transit – Heavy rail transit systems typically have complete separation from surrounding roadways and land uses (except at stations). These systems tend to have higher speeds and higher capacity compared to other transit systems and are typically electrically operated with completely separated trackway (such as subways or elevated trains).

Examples of heavy rail rapid transit include: BART in the San Francisco Bay Area, the New York Subway System, and the Washington D.C. Metro.

Bus rapid transit (BRT) – Bus rapid transit can include a range of bus improvements from providing bus priority at traffic signals to providing a completely separated roadway for buses. BRT systems are beginning to be developed in the U.S.

Examples of BRT include: Eugene, Oregon EMX System (opening January 2007) Los Angeles, Orange Line, and Seattle, Bus Tunnel.

Light rail transit – Light rail systems are electrically powered urban rail systems that operate with separated trackway that can operate in mixed traffic operation on city streets. Because they include some portions of mixed traffic operation, light rail is typically slower than heavy rail.

Examples of light rail systems include: Portland’s MAX system, Tacoma’s LINK system, and numerous systems around the US.

Streetcar – Streetcars typically operate as cars on tracks embedded in city streets. Auto traffic usually shares a lane with streetcar operations and the operation is subject to vehicle congestion on the roadway. Some streetcar systems have been in operation since early in the 20th century while some cities are building modern streetcar systems with new vehicles.

Examples of streetcars include: The Portland Streetcar, the Seattle Waterfront Streetcar and the San Francisco trolley.

Monorail – A monorail is a rail transit system in which a car moves on a single rail line. Monorail systems are typically elevated above surrounding roadways and land uses.

Examples of monorail transit include: Several cities in Japan, Seattle Center Monorail, and the Las Vegas Monorail.

Commuter rail – Commuter rail is rail transit service that uses an existing rail line connecting outer areas with a downtown area or other major attractor. Commuter rail serves longer distance trips and stations are relatively far apart (5+ miles between stations).

Examples of commuter rail systems include: the Seattle-Tacoma Sounder service, Long Island Railway, Chicago’s Metra system, and Washington County, OR in 2008.

Other HCT modes – In addition to looking at well-established HCT modes, the study will also take a look at new and innovative methods of moving large numbers of people.

Choosing corridors: Where will HCT routes be located?

A corridor is defined as an overall travel shed or travel demand market area that uses a common set of transportation facilities (freeway, arterial roadway, transit line, etc.) to reach a common general destination.

This study will focus on developing detailed information to understand the land use and transportation context for each potential corridor. This will help to identify the transportation problems and their underlying causes. Each corridor will be comprehensively evaluated to examine

- land use plans and policies,
- planned roadway improvements,

- existing transit services,
- major activity centers, and
- potential transit system improvements.

Determining the right choices for Clark County

Through a comprehensive analysis and evaluation, the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) wants to make sure that the HCT system study develops the right choices for Clark County residents by:

- Ensuring strong community involvement and support process
- Addressing transit and capacity needs
- Increasing the level of transit services
- Considering cost
- Identifying potential environmental impacts

How can I learn more or become involved with the study?

Input from the Clark County community is essential to the success of this study effort. You can get more information and share your comments in the following ways:

- Visit our Web site for an online comment form, fact sheets and other project information.
- Request a study briefing for your business or community group.
- Attend Sounding Board meetings and share your comments.
- Join the study e-mail list and receive periodic updates.



Light Rail

Contact Information:

Web Site: <http://rtc.wa.gov/hct>

E-mail: hct@rtc.wa.gov

Phone number: (360) 397-6067